



2021
April

Celebrating - and Continuing - Catherine Hamlin's Life's Work

As we celebrated Dr Catherine Hamlin's extraordinary life last month, we reflected on the many measures of her extraordinary impact over the past six decades. The most important is the 60,000 women's lives transformed by Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and the declining rate of obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.

However, it is estimated that up to 31,000 women across Ethiopia still suffer with a fistula injury and new fistulas continue to occur. Hamlin's medical team is determined to find and treat these women and increase the number of women's lives transformed by Hamlin to 100,000.

In January, Hamlin's bold new Patient Identification Program recommenced. Outreach is gaining pace and Hamlin's medical team performed a record number of surgeries in January and February.

Activity at Hamlin's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre, Desta Mender, is picking up again too, providing economic empowerment to women via vocational training. In February, 72 patients were enrolled in education and handcraft classes. You can buy their handmade wraps and scarves from the Hamlin Shop in Australia (store.hamlin.org.au). Proceeds from each purchase go back to the woman who made it.

Lectures at the Hamlin College of Midwives are going smoothly with all students back on site at the College after a difficult year in 2020 which saw COVID-19 related closures and remote learning. Recruitment of 30 new students from the Afar region and the Somali border of Ethiopia is also underway for the next academic year - an important expansion of Hamlin's midwifery outreach program to prevent obstetric fistula injuries and increase maternal health care in remote areas.

This year is shaping up to be a year of significant impact at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. We are thrilled with the progress being made. Your ongoing support and generosity makes this work possible. Whether you are a regular donor, part of a community group or a Hamlin Shop patron, you are making an important contribution. Thank you.

Carolyn Hardy
Chief Executive Officer
Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation



Celebrating a Life Extraordinary

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Catherine Hamlin Celebration Dinner at Doltone House in Sydney on 18th March, 2021.

It was an incredible evening and a wonderful celebration of Dr Catherine Hamlin, showcasing her six decades of care and dedication to the women of Ethiopia.

Catherine was one of the world's greatest humanitarians. No other woman, or man, has done as much to eradicate the preventable, crippling condition of obstetric fistula and give women back their lives.

Now it is up to us to continue Catherine Hamlin's journey. Together we will eradicate fistula once and for all.

We continue to be inspired by you, our caring community of Hamlin supporters. This work is only possible thanks to you.



Thank You for Helping to Continue Catherine Hamlin's Journey to Eradicate Fistula

Dr Catherine Hamlin's journey was one of passion, determination and selflessness. She dedicated her life to the women of Ethiopia; working tirelessly for decades to improve maternal health care across the country and to give women love, hope and the opportunity to regain their lives.

Thank you to everyone who recently gave to our Catherine Hamlin Anniversary Appeal. Collectively, you gave \$250,000! An incredible achievement which can fund 357 life-changing fistula repair operations or a four-year Midwifery degree for 13 students at the Hamlin College of Midwives - helping to prevent fistula injuries in the first place. It is only because of you, our supporters, that Hamlin is moving closer to realising Catherine's vision of eradicating fistula forever.

Your messages to Hamlin patients are in the post and on their way to Ethiopia!

If you haven't already, you can make a donation at hamlin.org.au/donate



Your Support in Action

Fatuma's new lease on life, thanks to you!

“The first day I arrived at Hamlin, and met so many women like me, I began hoping for a cure. Day by day, I started noticing the extraordinary care and love that the staff provided us. I was amazed.”

- Fatuma

Fatuma grew up surrounded by farms and mountains. In her small rural town of Gursum in Eastern Ethiopia, agriculture is the only source of income for families like hers. Tragically, Fatuma's geographic isolation was also the cause of her obstetric fistula injury.

At age 17, Fatuma married and was excited to start a new chapter in her life. A year later she became pregnant, and her family was filled with happiness and anticipation for the future. Fatuma went into labour at home, assisted by a traditional birth attendant and her mother. Both women were unable to recognise that Fatuma was experiencing an obstructed labour.

After two long days of painful labour, Fatuma was taken on a handmade stretcher to the nearest government hospital. The doctors saved Fatuma's life, but she tragically lost her baby and suffered an obstetric fistula injury.

In October 2020, after months of living with this debilitating injury, Fatuma arrived at Hamlin's Harar Fistula Hospital. After three weeks of pre-operative care, Fatuma successfully underwent a fistula repair surgery. She is now totally dry and has been discharged back home.

“In the time that I stayed here, Hamlin fed me good meals, taught me basic skills, gave me physical exercise to strengthen my body and most of all, cured me from a debilitating injury. Surprisingly, all these services were free of charge. This is a generosity that I could not even get from my beloved ones. Thank you,” says Fatuma.

All services at Hamlin are based on Dr Catherine Hamlin's pioneering Hamlin Model of Care, which is grounded in a fundamental respect for women and a commitment to provide complete and compassionate care. This care is provided free of charge to patients thanks to your ongoing support.



Surgical Repair An obstetric fistula injury can often be repaired with a single life-changing surgery.



Rehabilitation Hamlin provides nutrition plans and physiotherapy to help women regain their strength.



Reintegration Education and vocational training are provided to empower women as they leave Hamlin.



Counselling A counselling program is developed for each woman to support her and help her rebuild confidence.

The Hamlin Model of Care

The Hamlin Model of Care for treatment of obstetric fistula injuries considers both the physical impact and psychological trauma of fistula. Today, this model has been widely replicated around the world.



Hamlin's Clinical Team Carrying Catherine's torch

Under Dr Catherine Hamlin's pioneering guidance, over 60,000 Ethiopian women with fistula injuries have had their lives transformed under the Hamlin Model of Care. We are very proud of our achievements to date, but our task is nowhere near complete.

It is estimated up to 31,000 Ethiopian women still live with an untreated fistula injury and new cases continue to occur. The clinical team at Hamlin have achieved incredible things over the past, challenging, year. **They continue to carry Catherine's torch and vision and are working to increase the number of women's lives transformed from 60,000 to 100,000.**

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is a health care network of over 550 Ethiopian staff servicing six fistula hospitals, Desta Mender (Hamlin's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre), the Hamlin College of Midwives and 80 Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics. Hamlin is the reference organisation and leader in the fight to eradicate obstetric fistula around the world, blazing a trail for holistic treatment and care that empowers women to reassert their humanity, secure their health and wellbeing, and regain their roles in their families and communities.

You can read
more staff
profiles at
hamlin.org.au


Towards
100,000

“My hope for the future is generations of empowered women, who can make Ethiopia fistula-free.”
- Dr Zahara Sualih

Dr Zahara Sualih is a fistula surgeon at Hamlin's Mettu Fistula Hospital. She joined Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia in 2015 as a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology. Dr Zahara's motivation to work for Hamlin was clear: “It is the best centre in Ethiopia to take care of women in need,” she says.

Since joining Hamlin, Dr Zahara has performed approximately 700 fistula repair surgeries. “I am living a meaningful life!” exclaims Dr Zahara.

Thanks to Hamlin's status as a centre of excellence in maternal health care, Dr Zahara has been involved in both the Hamlin Urogynaecology Fellowship and the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) training program, making her an even better surgeon.

“It makes me a better physician to holistically manage women's birth injuries. My priority is to serve women with up to date, high quality care.”



Record Number of Fistula Operations

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has performed a remarkably high number of life-changing surgeries in January and February this year, with 326 women looking forward to their new life.

Of the 326 surgeries conducted so far this year, 28% were complex fistula surgeries. Women who have suffered with a fistula injury for years, even decades, are likely to have developed additional complications, including scar tissue build-up, long-term infection or renal damage.

Patients with more complex injuries often require extensive physiotherapy and rehabilitation to regain physical and mental strength. Some patients continue their treatment at Desta Mender, Hamlin's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre, where they also receive education and vocational training.

Whether a woman's injury requires a simple or complex fistula repair surgery, every fistula patient is greeted with love and care, given nutritious food, a handmade blanket and clean clothing. A customised program is developed for her that includes surgery, physiotherapy and counselling.

When the time comes for a patient to leave Hamlin, dry and renewed, she looks forward to building an empowered and independent life. If she chooses to have a baby in the future, Hamlin supports her by encouraging her to return to any Hamlin fistula hospital for a safe delivery.

Catherine's vision was for every woman in Ethiopia to be assured of a safe delivery and a live baby. This vision is possible thanks to the generosity of our wonderful Hamlin supporters. Thank you.



“This place will go on for many, many years until we have eradicated fistula altogether - until every woman in Ethiopia is assured of a safe delivery and a live baby.”

- Dr Catherine Hamlin



Medanit Returned to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, this Time to Safely Give Birth to her Baby Girl!

Medanit's life has been transformed thanks to the generosity of Hamlin supporters. In 2016, Medanit suffered with an obstetric fistula injury. After receiving surgery and care at Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital, Medanit returned home cured and dry.

At Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, we believe every woman should be able to give birth safely. That's why past fistula patients are encouraged to return to any Hamlin hospital for a safe caesarean delivery if they become pregnant again. This is provided for free thanks to donors.

In December 2020, Medanit returned to Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital. This time, she was eight months pregnant. We are delighted to report that she gave birth to a healthy baby girl!

“I can't thank you enough for what you are doing for women like myself. I forward my gratitude to all the individuals involved and pray for the continuation of this life-changing work.” - Medanit

Make Mum Feel Great with a Gift That Gives Back this Mother's Day. Only at the Hamlin Shop!

This Mother's Day, look no further - the Hamlin Shop is your one-stop shop. We have a range of stunning NEW ethical products from Ethiopia. With our favourite jewellery pieces and best-selling scarves back in stock, there's something to suit every mum! As you know, your purchase this Mother's Day will support fair trade artisans across Africa and women with fistula. Win-win!

New



Shop online at store.hamlin.org.au or call us on 02 9440 7001



Yoga for Hamlin Raises \$10,000!

A community of women in Newcastle, New South Wales has joined forces to support women in need in Ethiopia. Through a gold coin donation at their weekly yoga sessions, the Merewether Community Stretch Yoga Group has raised close to \$10,000 for Hamlin patients suffering with an obstetric fistula injury.

The group's generosity can fund ten standard fistula repair surgeries; a nightgown, dress and slippers for 15 patients, and provide 50 women with handicrafts training at Hamlin.

By banding together and fostering a joyful community, the Merewether Community Stretch Yoga Group has been able to make a positive difference in the lives of its members and support women in need in Ethiopia. Thank you so much!



If you would like to get involved and do something with your family, friends or local community group in support of women with fistula, please contact us at hq@hamlin.org.au for more information.

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

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Fistula Foundation

